

Mary Kay Webster  
Newington  
Consumer  
Supports bill 5433

I broke my neck in a car accident in 1985. I have five PCAs who work for me. When I put an ad out for PCAs on craigslist I get three times the amount of people on the Allied-provider list. That tells me something is wrong. I recently lost a PCA who worked 20 hours a week for me because she found a full-time job with healthcare benefits. She had worked for me for 2 and a half years and lived nearby, so it was convenient for both of us. She was very skilled, since she had worked in a long-term care facility before. She had another client through Allied, but had no benefits at all. Between myself and her other consumer, she had pieced together full-time hours but lacked full-time benefits.

My biggest challenge is replacing PCAs when they leave. I pay out of pocket for outgoing PCAs to train new hires because there is no paid training available. I would hope that one thing that could be bargained for is paid training. As for pay and benefits there is no way for one person to make improvements on their own. For example, my PCAs piece together full-time hours from multiple part-time jobs. That is not equitable. One voice by itself cannot change what a collective, unified voice can.

If PCA positions were more attractive, things would be better for consumers. As long as there are people who are willing to do this work, the more comfortable I feel that my ability to remain living independently in the community is assured. I feel strongly that an individual should have the right to live independently with dignity rather than living in a setting that is not of their choosing. As long as I can direct my own care, I want to remain in the community. I hope we can come together with one voice as workers and consumers to improve and refine programs like these, so they can continue to exist.